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COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS SUBCOMMITTEE HEARING

U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES WASHINGTON, DC 20515-6128

Subcommittee on Global Health, Global Human Rights, and International Organizations

Christopher Smith (R-NJ), Chairman

November 8, 2023

Subject: United Nations' Bigotry Towards Israel.
UNRWA Antisemitism Poisons Palestinian Youth

Thank you for the opportunity to submit a statement on behalf of the Simon Wiesenthal Center (SWC), a leading Jewish Global Human Rights NGO to this distinguished Subcommittee.

I am honored to serve as the SWC's first Children's Advocate. I am especially attuned to the fragility of young people, having devoted my professional career to Pediatrics.

I am sorry to report that I have witnessed first-hand the shocking indifference and lack of meaningful action by the United Nations and its numerous agencies tasked with the protection of children's rights when it comes to Israeli and Jewish children in dire need of support.

On October 23, 2023, just 16 days after the heinous targeted mass murder, wounding, wanton raping, kidnapping, and hostage-taking of thousands of innocent Israeli civilians by Hamas terrorists in Southern Israel, I represented the SWC (an NGO at the United Nations for decades) at a conference at UN headquarters in NYC sponsored by The Geneva Human Rights Platform entitled "Enhancing Cooperation Between New York and Geneva for The Protection of Children in Armed Conflict and From Other Forms of Violence." Present at this conference was UNICEF, The UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, The Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), The Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence Against Children, Child Rights Connect, Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict, as well as Ambassadors from Switzerland, Sierra Leone, and Uruguay.



Glaringly absent from the formal presentations was any direct mention of the urgent and dire plight of the Israeli children being held hostage in Gaza, including a 9-month-old infant and several toddlers, let alone the murder of 40 Israeli infants in one community alone. The only obtuse statement made was a reference to the “horrors in Israel and the occupied Palestinian territories” by the representative of OHCHR. Apparently, in order to maintain refugee status for residents of Gaza, the Palestinians insist that the Gaza Strip continues to be labeled “occupied territories”. This, despite the fact that Israel had unilaterally evacuated from Gaza, forcing over 8,000 Israelis who had established communities there to leave. The Palestinians were handed control of the territory and their lives in 2005 and later, in 2007, voted in Hamas to rule Gaza. The UN continues to validate the Palestinians’ useful Gaza “occupied territory” trope.

Following the formal presentations, the floor was opened to comments and questions. There were only two. One was from a professor of international law, and the other was from me. I brought up the issue of the barbaric attack of October 7th by Hamas terrorists, violating children’s rights in the most horrific way, during which families were slaughtered in their beds, some babies were found beheaded, some dismembered, some burned alive in kitchen ovens. A fetus was cut from its mother’s womb and both mother and child were then murdered. Children were found tied together with their parents and burned beyond recognition, and children who witnessed their parents being murdered in front of their eyes were taken as prisoners—all the most unimaginable crimes against humanity in utter violation of the rights of children so well delineated by these international organizations tasked with their protection. I asked members of the panel what their plan was to free the hostages, in particular the children. The only response I got was an abrupt cut off from the moderator, and silence to my question from the panel of self-anointed experts on children’s rights. During the luncheon that followed, the only person who thanked me for bringing up the issue was a representative of Uruguay, and I in turn thanked her for her humanity.

The following morning, I along with Rabbi Abraham Cooper, Associate Dean and Director of Global Social Action for the Simon Wiesenthal Center and current Chair of the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom, met with a senior official in UN Secretary General Guterres’ office. We asked him to communicate to the Secretary General the following points:



1. Everything must be done to mobilize the international community to gain the immediate unconditional release of all the hostages.
2. We expressed our alarm over the increasing use of UNRWA schools and facilities as staging areas for missile strikes and other terrorist activities by Hamas.
3. We cautioned that when the IDF enters the Hamas- controlled Gaza, Gazan youth will be used by Hamas and PIJ as suicide terrorists and human shields. Inevitably there will be those from the media, NGOs, UN Member States and Diplomats who will accuse the IDF of killing Palestinian children. But it is Hamas and Islamic Jihad who have the blood of Palestinian youth on their hands.

I also was witness to the utter anti-Israel bias of the report presented to the UN General Assembly by the head of the Commission of Inquiry, Navi Pillay, and the UN Special Rapporteur on the "Occupied" [Palestinian Territories Francesca Albanese](#). "The oppression and trauma suffered by Palestinian children, half of the Palestinian population under Israeli rule, is a unique stain on the international community," Albanese declared.

Her bias and selective morality was devastating. It was a travesty that made a mockery of the founding principles of the United Nations to sit among diplomats from a significant number of nation state representatives, so full of hate for the Jewish people and listened as some openly expressed their support for the monstrous crimes against humanity committed by Hamas against innocent Israeli civilians.

The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), which has a mandate focusing exclusively on children, has been largely silent when it came to the execution of 40 Israeli infants and the murder of entire Jewish families by Hamas terrorists. They have made no effort to demand the immediate and unconditional release of the 32 Israeli children being held in Gaza. Instead, their efforts have been solely focused on humanitarian aid to the Palestinian children in Gaza who too are suffering at the hands of Hamas. UNICEF also called for an immediate ceasefire, which would only benefit Hamas. On UNICEF's website is the tagline "Every Child Protected." One is left to ponder, why that doesn't extend to Jewish children?

Similarly silent, Save the Children, an organization that has general consultative status at the UN, is undertaking an emergency fund raiser urging donors to rush a gift to have every dollar matched, with the tagline "In Gaza, one child is dying every 15 minutes from this war." Again, this respected children's charity shows no concern for the Jewish children being held now for over a month as hostages in Gaza.



This past summer, the Special Representative of the Secretary- General for Children and Armed Conflict, Virginia Gamba, published the Secretary General's annual report on Children and Armed Conflict (CAAC). Our analysis of her report, "Stop Blaming Israel for the Weaponization of Children by the Palestinian Authority, Hamas, and Islamic Jihad" (1) once again confirms the profound anti-Israel bias of the UN. Whereas the numbers of children recruited and used in combat and other roles is diligently denoted in the CAAC report as a "Grave violation", when it came to the section on "Israel and the State of Palestine" there was no mention of the generations of Palestinian children indoctrinated and recruited by these terrorist organizations to be used as child soldiers to kill Israelis. This well documented abuse of Palestinian children by Hamas, Palestinian Islamic Jihad, and the Palestinian Authority (PA) is in direct violation of the "Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict" (OPAC), which explicitly prohibits the participation of minors in armed conflict. OPAC was ratified and entered into force by the UN in 2002. "Responding to the perceived gaps of the Convention of the Rights of the Child (CRC) in relation to child recruitment, the Optional Protocol introduces a blanket prohibition of recruitment of children under 18 by non-State armed groups (NSAG) and their use in hostilities, regardless of whether the recruitment process can be considered forced or voluntary, and requires that States parties take all the necessary measures to prevent such recruitment, including criminalization: article 4(2) (2). **Ratification and accession of OPAC by "The State of Palestine" occurred on April 7, 2014.** (3,4)

Absurdly, while the use of children as human shields was condemned in Ms. Gamba's report, it was Israel and not Hamas that the CAAC charged with deploying this inhuman tactic. We asked, "is it not "societal child abuse" that Palestinian children are being put in harm's way? Who is to blame when an armed Palestinian teen indoctrinated and trained to murder Jews and become a martyr is neutralized by Israel's security forces? Does the world expect that IDF soldiers must first check an ID to see if a terrorist firing his weapon has reached his 18th birthday?"

1 <https://jewishjournal.com/commentary/opinion/361745/stop-blaming-israel-for-the-weaponization-of-children-by-the-palestinian-authority-hamas-and-islamic-jihad/>

2 digitallibrary.un.org/record/3825914/files/dee195f7-en.pdf, United nations Office on Drugs and Crime Prevention for Children (UNODC-CP) Prevention of Child Recruitment and Exploitation by Terrorist and Violent Extremist Groups: The Role of the Justice System, A Training Manual, UN, Vienna, 2019

3 https://treaties.un.org/Pages/ViewDetails.aspx?src=TREATY&mtdsg_no=IV-11-b&chapter=4&clang=_en#EndDec

4 [https://treaties.un.org/doc/Publication/MTDSG/Volume I/Chapter IV/IV-11-b.en.pdf](https://treaties.un.org/doc/Publication/MTDSG/Volume%20I/Chapter%20IV/IV-11-b.en.pdf)



Ms. Gamba's report for the Secretary General also failed to acknowledge who were the funders of 630 summer camps, which this past summer-as in years past- were used to indoctrinate and incite against Israel, including promoting the glorification of terrorists and the Right of Return. 65,000 boys and girls attended these camps in the summer of 2023 as reported by the MEMRI Institute (5), which noted that "the PLO's Higher Council for Youth and Sports, which operates the camps, has received funding in the past from the EU and from UN organizations, including the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the United Nations Development Program (UNDP)."

Your former colleague, Congressman Steve Israel, published an Op-ed on October 25th entitled "The roots of Hamas' terror attack can be found in Gaza's schools" (6) in which he cited a 2018 article published in the Times of Israel I co-authored entitled "The Path to Peace Begins in the Classroom" (7). Tragically, five years have transpired since that article was published and yet, despite the efforts of so many, including Congressman Chris Smith, UNRWA schools and summer camps continue to poison the minds of Palestinian youth.

In that 2018 article, we pointed out "A curriculum of hatred permeates all subject matter, from elementary arithmetic to high school social studies and science. Martyrdom is glorified, any historical connection of Jews to their biblical homeland is fictionalized, contemporary maps of the region omit the existence of the UN member state of Israel, Jews are demonized, and terrorist/jihad concepts are woven into songs, plays, and academia. "The Right of Return" for over 5 million (and now closer to 6 million) Palestinians is taught as a birthright — clearly an attempt to destroy the State of Israel." We cautioned that "it has been a monumental error in judgement to ignore UNRWA's complicity in allowing a hate- filled education system to function unfettered in its schools for all these years. If this indoctrination had been properly addressed decades ago, we would likely not be in the situation we are in today, faced with a population of Palestinians educated in UNRWA schools unwilling to even consider a peaceful resolution to a conflict that has cost way too many innocent lives, and benefits no one, certainly not Palestinians."

5 <https://www.memri.org/reports/plo-summer-camps-%E2%80%93-part-ii-inculcating-non-recognition-israel-palestinian-refugees-right>

6 <https://forward.com/opinion/566841/hamas-schools-indoctrination-antisemitic-textbooks-gaza/>

7 <https://www.timesofisrael.com/the-path-to-peace-begins-in-the-classroom/>



In conclusion, “if tolerance is to win over hate, the PA Ministry of Education’s schoolbooks must be re-written, removing the hateful incitement and incorporating a peace curriculum. Those teachers culpable in indoctrinating their students must be retrained or replaced with appropriately trained teachers. A system of accountability and oversight must be instituted.”

Now, in the year 2023, we find ourselves faced with the consequences of five more years of UNRWA’s systematic genocidal anti-Semitic education, more pernicious and deeply entrenched than we even imagined in 2018, yet in hindsight was so predictable. It is a safe assumption that many Hamas terrorists are likely products of an UNRWA education. IMPACT- SE recently put out a statement on October 25th that “at least a hundred Hamas terrorists are graduates of the UNRWA education system, including two participants in the October 7 massacre of Israeli civilians.” (8)

In Steve Israel’s recent article, he made the case that because “A generation of children have been taught to hate from anti-Semitic textbooks” ... “the roots of this generation of Hamas terrorism resides in ideas fomented in Gaza’s education system for decades.” He pointed out that those in Gaza who will suffer the most are the children and urged that “Israel, the United States and other regional partners must work to build a better future for these children. That means an education system that abolishes hate from its curriculum. That means a government that teaches children how to build, not blow up... That means an end to Hamas’ reign of terror, and schools that do not teach students to hate their neighbors.”

We at the SWC have been at the forefront for years of human rights organizations shining a light onto the genocidal, anti- Semitic, anti-Israel, anti-peace, terrorist-glorifying extremist ideology that permeates the curriculum produced by the Palestinian Ministry of Education and used in schools throughout the West Bank, east Jerusalem, and Gaza, including those run by the United Nations Relief Works Agency (UNRWA). We all see now what a disaster this has led to for all concerned. This educational system, along with the perverse policy of “Pay for Slay” that financially rewards Palestinians who kill Jews, must no longer be tolerated, and supported with United States tax dollars.

We implore all donor nations, led by the United States, UK, France, Germany, and Japan, to carry out their own independent review of UNRWA’s student curriculum and special materials designed for teachers. They will discover a war curriculum, not a peace curriculum. They will not find a single map identifying the state of Israel, but they will discover the glorification of Palestinian terrorist mass murderers.



Finally, we beseech our government to do everything in its power to facilitate the immediate and unconditional release of ALL the hostages, starting with our fellow Americans, and to insist that the International Red Cross be allowed to visit and attend to the hostages as a condition for humanitarian aid to be brought into the Gaza Strip. We urge the President and Secretary of State to not interfere with Israel's efforts to safeguard all the children in this region from the murderous Hamas menace. As a pediatrician with thirty years of clinical experience caring for children, I remind everyone that an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.

Respectfully submitted on behalf of the Simon Wiesenthal Center,

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